

Aliens

A whiteout from the stratosphere
has buried the house
in silence, a void no one
will be escaping.

Security lights blink on
five brothers here before dawn
to save my parents,
the oldest boy shivering
in a windbreaker and slick
shoes, the ten-year-old
with socks for gloves.

They might be miserable with a dad
who gave them snow shovels for Christmas
and now insists they enter glacial dark,
but they are intergalactic seekers,
the driveway endless distance
they must plow through. They radio
each other from their small craft.

I offer hot chocolate,
a friendly port, but they say
they must return to the mother ship
and sleep two more hours
to keep enemy lasers from piercing
their brains and thinking their thoughts.

Their quest: saving the galaxy. Light years
from now they will look back
at the blue planet, that wobbly
little star, recall explosions, drifts, blasts
through ice chunks, powder, glaze,
proud they helped earthlings risk
kindness, that they cleared a path.

—Susan Elizabeth Howe